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## AARP rally opposes Social Security proposal

Sen. Jon S. Corzine, Rep. Rob Andrews, and others denounced the President's plan in Cherry Hill. Andrews called it "theft."

By Rita Giordano  
Inquirer Staff Writer

Bolstered by banners, placards, free Danish, and the promise of door prizes, the AARP brought its campaign against President Bush's proposal to partially privatize Social Security to South Jersey yesterday and found an eager audience.

Despite oncoming snow, about 240 mostly senior citizens filled the hall of the Cherry Hill Community Center to hear local congressmen and several denounce the President's plan.

Their message at the pep-rally-like gathering is that Social Security needs to be strengthened but and that the White House's plan would create debt - \$2 trillion in the first 10 years alone, according to unfurled across the room - and curtail benefits.

"We need to stop this proposal from becoming reality," said Bill Mayer, AARP's state communications director. "My question to you is: Can we count on you?"

"Yeah!" was the shout back from audience members, who at the speaker's urging waved yellow placards with the message "No Carve-Outs." The slogan referred to Bush's plan to allow creation of personal account investments.

The President has said his plan, which would let people put as much as 4 percent of their payroll accounts, would not affect anyone born before 1950.

Claire Edelman of Monroe Township told how she became a young widow 40 years ago with a man and three children to support.



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"What saved me were those steady, regular Social Security checks," Edelman said, noting that th helped her children pay for college.

Sen. Jon S. Corzine (D., N.J.) called Social Security "a great covenant from one generation to the reduced the elderly poverty rate from 50 percent to 10 percent.

According to Corzine, the national debt would rise from \$12,000 to \$30,000 per person with Bush

U.S. Rep. Rob Andrews (D., N.J.) called for the "repeal of all or most of" the President's tax cuts ; diverting Social Security funding for other purposes.

"In the real world, that's called theft. In Washington, it's called deficit reduction," Andrews said.

As the aroma of the free sliced-steak lunch that was to follow wafted into the hall - and with the pr drawing for prizes such as AARP sweatshirts, travel mugs, and pens that blow bubbles in exchan letters opposing Bush's plan to their Congress members - attendees got to question the speakers

Nancy Hall of Moorestown said the Social Security issue was important, "but this President is cra

She said she thought his proposal was unlikely to go through, but "on the other hand, it takes our crucial problems in this country." Should they be focusing elsewhere? she asked.

Corzine told her that this was the real deal. "I don't think you should underestimate how committe administration is to this concept," he said.

Pearl Friedman of Cherry Hill wanted to know what was being done to reach young people, many support private investment of Social Security money.

Catching the end of the program were about 40 students from four high schools who were taking Hill's annual Student Government Day.

"I think it's not as big of an issue for us," said Elise Pape, 17, from Camden Catholic High School, meet Corzine.

Leonard Markidan, 18, of Cherry Hill High School East, disagreed.

"I definitely think it's a pressing issue for our generation," he said.

Thoughtfully, he suggested he would look into the matter further before making "a solid decision."

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